

## 60            EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND    REFORMER

ever their eccentricities, whatever their excesses, they have also studied, accumulated in that same Quartier a rich store of scholarship and science, which has enabled many of them to confer benefits on mankind.

Zola, then, knew the former Quartier in its last lingering hours, when there were no longer any taverners who sold books for hard cash and bought them back for a snack or a drink, but when old clo'men still perambulated the streets, when La Californie and other *liMnes* still existed on the confines, and when L'Acad^mie, the grimy absinthe den, still flourished in the Rue St. Jacques under the patronage of *litterateurs* who never wrote, painters who never painted, and spurious students in law and medicine and what not besides. Those were the men of whom one said: "When they are not talking they drink, when they are not drink- ing they talk." How they lived nobody knew, but one of them, a notorious character, who after a few glasses of ab- sinthe would improvise the most extraordinary comic songs with rattling tunes, slept for some years in a stable. He was turned out of it one winter, and a few days later was found frozen to death in the moat of the fortifications near Montrouge.

Zola, for his part, indulged in no such bibulous dissipa- tion, but he elbowed it often enough. And in

his dis-  
tressful poverty, without guide or support, it  
was fatal that  
he should turn to such consolation as might  
be offered  
him. Thus he went the way of many another  
young man  
dwelling in the Quartier, finding at last a  
companion for  
his penury, not the ideal Ninon of whom he  
had dreamt  
in Provence, not the Musette nor the Mimi  
whom Murger  
portrayed with the help rather of his  
imagination than of